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ABSTRACT

This workbook is part of a series devoted to all areas of charter-school development. The third of five workbooks, it focuses on assessment and accountability and examines such issues as academic accountability, fiscal accountability, public/parental accountability, rule compliance, assessment and evaluation, financial management, developing a business plan, and how to connect vision and mission with assessment and accountability. The text is divided into two sections. Chapter one looks at various aspects of accountability. It defines accountability, offers examples of accountability plans, discusses different types of accountability, and demonstrates how to create a culture of accountability. The next chapter explores program evaluation and student assessment and what is required in these areas of charter development. This section discusses the objective and purpose of evaluation; details different program-evaluation standards, such as utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy; and describes types of evaluation. It also outlines the steps for conducting an evaluation, for assessing students, for aligning standards, for selecting assessment tools, and for collecting and reporting performance data. Each chapter features a selection of "tools" that contain activities to help generate ideas, checklists to help keep track of what has been accomplished, helpful resources, and other information. (RJM)

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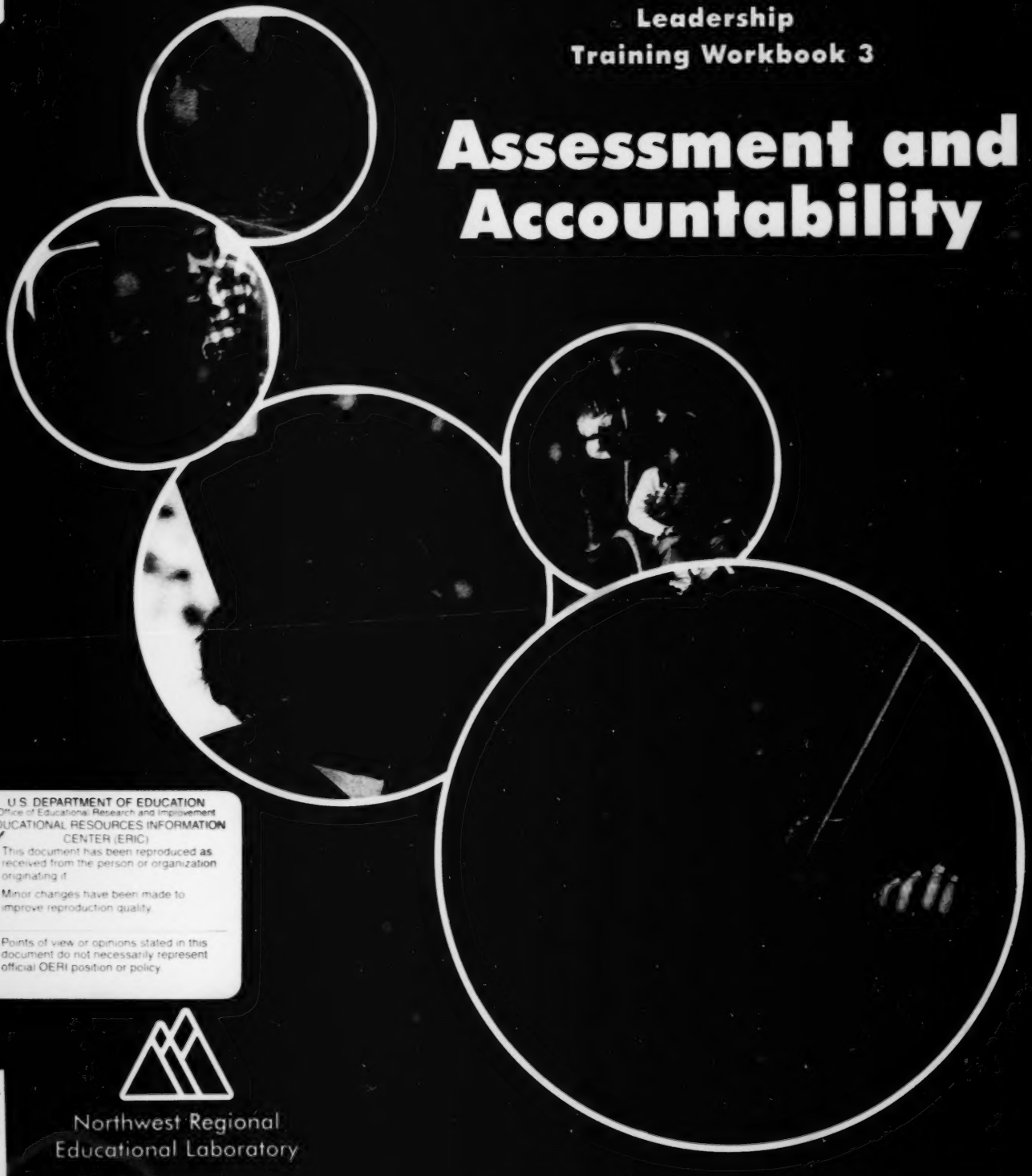
Charter Starters

Leadership
Training Workbook 3

Assessment and Accountability



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Charter Starters
Leadership Training
Workbook 3

Assessment and Accountability

Rural Education Program
Dr. Joyce Ley, Director

July 1999

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Preface

The Charter Starters Workbook series provides material and resources in all areas of charter school development. The material is based on five core content areas, and each workbook in the series is meant to stand alone:

- **Workbook 1: Start-Up Logistics**—drafting a charter, creating a vision and mission, developing a core founding group, accessing expert information, navigating the application process, acquiring a facility, allocating resources, establishing a legal entity, and contracting for services
- **Workbook 2: Regulatory Issues**—special education requirements, civil rights regulations, federal and state laws and regulations, and requirements for parent involvement
- **Workbook 3: Assessment and Accountability**—academic accountability, fiscal accountability, public/parental accountability, rule compliance, assessment and evaluation, financial management, developing a business plan, and how vision and mission connect with assessment and accountability
- **Workbook 4: Governance and Management**—creating an organizational structure, establishing strong leadership, handling personnel issues, developing internal policies, creating a board and board bylaws, managing growth, and dealing with liability issues
- **Workbook 5: Community Relations**—coordinating public relations, marketing the school, and dealing with controversy

The workbooks are targeted toward both charter school founders/developers and charter school trainers. Although originally designed as the training material for a five-day training academy, each workbook is relatively self-contained. This workbook contains information on assessment and accountability.

Two precautions:

1. *The information that is provided in this workbook is not intended to be prescriptive. We encourage charter school founders to be creative and to innovate as they develop unique schools that serve the needs of their communities.*
2. *All information contained in this workbook should be considered as informational only and should not substitute for legal advice. We recommend that charter school developers obtain legal counsel whenever appropriate. We also advise that materials in this workbook, whenever possible, be tailored according to state specifications; the information in the workbook is not state-specific.*

Conventions and features used in the series

Resource tools follow each subsection of each workbook. These tools fall into five categories: activities, samples, checklists, detailed information, and resources. References to tools within workbooks are labeled with icons so you can easily identify each tool's category.

Tools labeled	Are
	Activities to help you actually begin working on ideas and solutions.
	Sample forms/policies for you to use as examples in making your own forms and policies.
	Checklists to help you keep track of what's done and what you still need to work on.
	Detailed information on a particular issue, such as a matrix, list of addresses, or federal regulation.
	Resources that list places to go for more information, including the Internet.

NWREL staff are available to provide assistance and direction in using the workbooks to develop training sessions for charter school developers. This includes providing training based on workbooks and/or providing assistance in finding expert trainers for specific topics. Additional questions, comments, or recommendations regarding the information in the workbook series are welcome and can be addressed to the Rural Education Program (phone: 1-800-547-6339, ext. 546; e-mail: ruraled@nwrel.org).

Accountability

What is Accountability?

The basic charter school concept is encompassed in the idea of "autonomy for accountability." Charter schools are public schools that are granted a specific amount of autonomy, determined by state law and the specific charter, to make decisions concerning the organizational structure, curriculum, and educational emphasis of their school. Charter schools are granted waivers from certain regulations that typically bind public schools. In return for this additional autonomy, charter schools are held accountable for:

- Satisfactory academic achievement by their students on state or districtwide tests and similar measures
- Success in meeting identified goals—academic and other—as set forth in charters or contracts
- Responsibility in the use of public funds
- Compliance in all applicable laws and regulations (such as public health and civil rights) not waived for charter schools

Accountability Plans

The accountability plan is the mechanism through which the school indicates:

- The goals (outcomes) it plans to achieve
- Performance levels it will be held accountable for attaining

It is important to recognize that the performance of charter schools will be compared by the public and the media to that of traditional public schools and with other charter schools. The design of a quality accountability plan will acknowledge and prepare for this inevitable comparison. A charter school accountability plan is designed to provide:

- Information needed to measure and track the school's progress toward its goals
- Program adjustments, when needed
- Reports to parents, the community, and the chartering authority on performance and progress

An accountability plan needs an organizing framework. Below is an example of one organizing framework that includes an outline of six critical questions charter school developers need to consider as they develop a student accountability plan for their school.

The six key questions are:

1. What is our school's mission?
2. What do we want our students to know and be able to do?
3. How will we know whether our students are achieving or attaining the goals and standards we specified in our charter?
4. How will we gather and monitor the necessary student performance information?
5. How will we set and measure progress toward school performance goals?
6. How will we use the student and school performance information we have gathered?

See Tool I: Guidelines for Preparing an Accountability Plan (Page 13)

See Tool II: Work and Example Sheets (Page 22)

See Tool III: Sample Accountability Plan (Page 27)

Types of Accountability

Four main categories of accountability will be discussed:

1. Academic
2. Fiscal
3. Rule Compliance
4. Public/Parental

Academic Accountability

The basic question: Is the academic program a success? The quest for educational accountability relies on a three-legged stool:

- Standards
- Assessments
- Consequences

Standards

Academic standards describe:

- What students should know and be able to do in core subjects at critical points in their education career.
- Desired results of schooling. They specify, for example, what students should know and be able to do by the time they graduate from high school.

Whether developing student outcomes for the first time or reviewing previous ones, the process of developing standards at the school level includes four key steps.

Step 1: The charter school standards team (which could comprise a group of parents, teachers, and administrators) reviews the school's mission to reflect on what its purpose is, whom it hopes to serve, and what its expectations of those students are.

Step 2: The team develops a list of exit outcomes, or "graduation standards," of those qualities and skills it feels its graduates should achieve.

Step 3: The team creates a list of interim skills and "benchmark" outcomes that allow the students to demonstrate their progress in attaining the exit standards.

Step 4: Teachers develop lists of specific academic skills that students will demonstrate in each subject area and class.

Steps 1 and 2 (reviewing mission and developing exit outcomes) should be done "in a vacuum," without consulting any outside standards documents. During Steps 3 and 4 (developing benchmark and classroom-level skills), charter developers should consult as many standards documents as possible to help inform their work.

Types of standards: content-based and performance-based

As charter school operators engage in the rich process of developing their three levels of standards—exit, benchmarks, and classroom level—what kind of standards to develop becomes a key issue.

- Some schools develop extensive lists of exit outcomes that are largely content-based. Their graduates are required to have read a certain type and list of literary works, to do a writing sample of a set length, or to do a research project on predetermined scientific topics.
- Other schools focus more on performance-based exit criteria, with flexibility in the content that may be used to demonstrate the desired skills. For example, many schools list "critical thinking" and "communication" skills among their desired student outcomes.
- Still other schools develop their standards at all levels by blending both content and performance in various ways. A school may require its students to master certain content skills, such as basic algebra by the end of ninth grade. At the same time it may allow the same students to demonstrate their communication skills by the end of ninth grade with evidence from various classes and educational experiences, such as giving a presentation describing their science projects or their school-to-career internships.

With a standards-based accountability system, schools are assessed by their results and their students' achievements, rather than by how closely they follow rules and regulations. How do we know if a student, teacher, or school is meeting the standards?

Assessments

High-quality charters and charter contracts also clearly specify how the school will assess student progress toward the school's goals and standards. Measurements directly linked to the standards are critical. Assessments come in many forms:

- Multiple-choice exams
- Open-ended questions
- Essay tests
- "Authentic assessments" such as portfolios of student work

To be effective, though, assessments must yield reliable information about student, teacher, and school performance vis-à-vis the academic standards.

Consequences

- Students should be promoted to the next grade only when they have met the academic standards required
- Schools that consistently fail to meet standards should face interventions (such as reconstitution) and penalties (including the possibility of being closed down)
- Teachers whose students consistently fail to meet standards should also face retraining and eventual termination
- Students, teachers, and schools should enjoy rewards for high performance

Additional Resources for Academic Accountability

For more information on standards:

See the Program Evaluation and Student Assessment sections of *Workbook 3: Assessment and Accountability* for more information.

Look up the federal charter schools Web site for information on standards and private groups that offer assistance in developing school-based standards, www.uscharterschools.org/tec_assit/ta_standards.html.

For details regarding the national test, see: www.ed.gov/nationaltests.

For more information on exit outcomes and benchmarks:

California's state standards and assessment activity, www.csus.edu/ier/charter.html (Charter School Development Center), www.ca.gov/goldstandards (Commission for the Establishment of Academic Content and Performance Standards), and www.cde.ca.gov (California Department of Education, including State Board of Education news).

The Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL) Web site provides a list of resources for standards development (www.mcrel.org/standards), including several helpful background pieces in the complex area of standards.

Links to other resources for schools starting to develop their standards include an online searchable database of standards and benchmarks (www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/) that crosses multiple subjects and grade levels. See the online version of *Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K–12 Education*.

As a service to schools and school districts, a team of experienced analysts at McREL will also review school, district, or statewide K–12 academic standards

for validity, consistency, redundancy, and formatting. Contact, fee, and more detailed information can be found at the previous link.

The Charter School Development Center has posted two pieces on standards and charter schools. The first is *Navigating Through the Standards Maze* (www.csus.edu/ier/charter/standardsmaze.html) from Making Charters Work, a series of "how-to" briefing papers providing strategies for charter school developers.

The second is *School Reform, Accountability, and Charter Schools* (www.csus.edu/ier/charter/charteraccount.html), a six-page briefing paper that sets the context for school accountability, explains why student performance is of critical importance for charter developers and sponsors, and clarifies what student outcomes are and how to develop and measure them.

A Comprehensive Guide to Designing Standards-Based Districts, Schools, and Classrooms, by Marzano and Kendall, published by McREL and ASCD and can be ordered online (www.ascd.org).

For a list of highly regarded national, state, district, and other standards, see:

Content Knowledge, a Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K–12 Education, by Kendall and Marzano, www.mcrel.org. This large book contains nearly 250 standards and related benchmarks in 11 major disciplines (ranging from math to language areas to "life skills"). It seems to borrow heavily from, and provides brief descriptions of, the major national-level, standards-setting efforts in many subject areas. It only briefly references state-level efforts.

The Putnam Valley Schools maintains an extremely helpful site including an annotated list of Internet sites (www.putwest.boces.org/standards.html) with K–12 educational standards and curriculum framework.

Fiscal Accountability

Is the school a viable organization? Charter schools are accountable for the lawful use of public funds. It is impossible to open or operate a charter school without proper financial management. Foundation budgets, per-pupil expenditures, and start-up funding are some of the major revenues and costs applied in the development of a financial plan. The financial plan is:

- A fiscal reflection of the mission and vision
- A design principle of a school
- A description of the costs involved in starting the charter school
- A projection of the school's future finances

Elements of a Financial Plan

- School's vision and instructional vision
- School's charter and relationship with the charter-granting agency
- Facilities occupied by the school
- The legal structure of the school
- Total number of students
- Planned enrollment and plans for future enrollment growth
- Administration and management
- A description of school's legal structure and governing board members
- A listing of school's administrative/non-staff, and their responsibilities
- A description of school's facilities and other major capital needs and resources
- An overview of major planned changes in enrollment, operations, facilities, or other factors
- A balanced annual operations budget
- A monthly cash flow statement
- A three- to five-year budget projection
- A balance sheet summarizing all assets and debts of the school at the start of the fiscal year
- Assumptions underlying the fiscal statements

Usefulness of a Financial Plan

- To provide essential planning information for the charter school's staff and governing board
- To anticipate programmatic strengths and weaknesses
- To show how sensitive your projections are to changes in basic assumptions
- To ensure that funds are used as efficiently and effectively as possible

Since the resources available to a school are always limited, innovative school developers must develop equally innovative budgets to make the most of limited funds.

Financial Information

Charter schools are required to provide detailed financial information (to parents, charter-granting agency, sponsors, etc.) about their operation to demonstrate that public funds have been devoted to uses that are faithful to the public trust. The following are some of the main financial reporting requirements of charter schools:

- Annual report
- Pupil and financial end-of-year report
- Year-end audit

During the renewal process it is very likely that the charter-granting agency will use the accountability plan, annual progress reports, financial audits, and site visit reports in deciding whether to renew a charter. Work with an auditor early in the process to help ensure your compliance.

Additional Resources

For more information on establishing financial systems and reporting procedures:

See the Business Plan and Financial Management section of *Workbook 4: Governance and Management*, for more information.

The Arizona Auditor General's Uniform System of Financial Records for Arizona Charter Schools. This manual, which may be helpful at a generic level to charter developers in other states, is not yet available in electronic form but may be ordered for a fee through the Arizona Department of Education's Central Distribution Office, (602) 542-3088.

California Charter School Finance by Eric Premack. This manual provides a comprehensive overview of California charter school finance. It offers a detailed explanation of the fiscal-related provisions in California's charter legislation and explains how charter schools can calculate their revenues, establish fiscal relationships with their sponsor districts, develop a basic budget and financial plan, and establish financial management systems and policies. Please note the manual is recommended primarily for California audiences due to the state-specific nature of most of the material. This publication is not available in electronic form.

The Office of Management and Budget
www.whitehouse.gov/WH/EOP/OMB/html/ombhome.html
Look for memoranda explaining the scope of audits required of nonprofit and public entities that receive large amounts of federal funding. Depending on how much money your school receives from the federal government, your school may be subject to these detailed audit standards.

See Financial Management, Tool II: Start-Up Worksheet in Workbook 4: Governance & Management

Rule Compliance

Schools are also accountable for some "process" items—for example, they must comply with:

- All federal and state laws and rules that are not waived for them. In states with strong charter laws, these are most apt to involve statutory mandates forbidding discrimination and providing for equal opportunity and adherence to minimum health and safety norms.

See *Workbook 2: Regulatory Issues* for more information.

Others may be unique to a state—for instance, the "streamline tenure" requirements in New Jersey charter law that pertain to public-school employees who leave their schools to work in charter schools for more than three years.

- For states that do not have a mega-waiver provision exempting charter schools from most laws and regulations, the individual charter document spells out which rules do and do not apply to that particular school. Read your charter! Where charter schools must obey the same rules as conventional public schools and school systems, they are almost certain to be obliged to document their performance via the "regular" reporting systems that districts use.

Public/Parental Accountability

To whom are charter schools accountable?

- Parents
- Students
- School board
- Granting agency

Parents choose to enroll their children in charter schools because they share similar values and beliefs about learning with the charter school founders in one or more of the following areas:

- Safety
- Curricular focus
- Instructional methods better suited to their children's learning needs
- Small class size

Parental Accountability. Charter school operators are accountable to parents for at least choosing their schools, as well as being responsive to the needs and demands of parents.

- Let parents know what the school is about, what is expected from them from the very beginning
- Have parents contribute to the mission to have "buy-in" and support
- Keeping parents informed of all the schools activities:
  - — Enrollment
  - — Finances
  - — Assessment results

Developing Public Trust Pre-Charter

- Meet with the community and/or parents
  - — What do parents expect?
  - — What does the community expect?
- Work with the community and parents to develop and expand the mission
- Work with the district to begin some type of collaborative partnership
- Establish the expectations of your sponsor
- Keep parents aware of school expectations

For more information, see the Marketing Your School section of *Workbook 5: Community Relations*.

How To Create a Culture of Accountability

There is every effort not to trample on the unique character and mission of each school, and so charter schools should work to develop an individual accountability contract, which describes clear, concrete, and measurable school performance objectives.

In addition to emphasizing student achievement, schools may also include:

- Attendance
- Parental satisfaction
- Safety and order
- School tone
- Staff development

An accountability plan describes the measures the school uses to document its progress toward these objectives, including credible student assessment tools for annually tracking student performance. Charter schools must report their objectives and progress toward them in the annual report followed by an audited financial statement several months later. In addition, some charter schools are subject to an annual site visit conducted by the Department of Education (DOE) involving a small group of citizens who are not involved in the school. The group includes one parent, teacher, school leader, business person, and public official. The purpose of these visits is to augment and verify the information contained in the annual report. Site visits also help educate the general public about charter schools and provide a charter school with critical feedback from a jury of objective peers.

See the Business Plan and Financial Management section of *Workbook 4: Governance and Management* for more information.

See Tool IV: Sample Annual Site Visit Protocol for Charter Schools (Page 43)

Tool I: Guidelines for Preparing an Accountability Plan

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Prepared for:
The Massachusetts Department of Education Charter School Office
January 1997

Introduction

Why Accountability?

In granting charters to a number of schools, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts enabled these schools to pursue their missions free from several state regulations. However, along with deregulation, the Commonwealth also stated high expectations for accountability from its charter schools. The Secretary of Education mandated that each school submit an Accountability Plan at the end of its FIRST year of operation and state progress annually thereafter in Annual Reports. The Accountability Plan, which constitutes a contract between the school and the state, establishes the criteria by which the state will hold the school accountable over the life of its charter. According to Technical Advisory 96-1, which lays out the terms of accountability, each charter school must do four things:

- Develop and pursue its own clear, concrete, and measurable school performance objectives
- Measure and document progress toward these objectives
- Use credible student assessment tools for annually tracking student performance
- Report its objectives, progress toward them, and student assessment results, along with other information in its annual report

Although the emphasis of the Accountability Plan tends to be on accountability to the state, the plan can also have multiple uses for the school and community, such as: accountability to the school community; a tool for continuous improvement, based on information, data, and feedback; and a means of proving success. Developing the plan is an opportunity for the school to revisit its mission and its objectives with the school community. It may be helpful, although it is not necessary, to use an outside facilitator to guide the school through this process.

Structure of this Document

This document provides guidelines to help charter schools prepare their Accountability Plans, using the following format:

Topic 1. Accountability Plan Common Format
See Section II

Topic 2. Accountability Questions and Operations
See Section III

Topic 3. Accountability Plan Elements: Explanations, Clues, Examples
See Section IV

Topic 4. Accountability Work and Example Sheets
See Section V

Accountability Plan Common Format

The Accountability Plan Format is organized around measurable performance objectives, including both student performance objectives and school performance objectives. For each objective there are expectations, strategies for attainment, progress indicators, measurement tools, and a description of current status. The format of the plan looks like the outline below.

Measurable Student Performance Objectives

Student Performance Objective #1

- Expectation(s)
- Strategy(ies) for attainment
- Progress indicators
- Measurement tool
- Current status

Student Performance Objective #2

- (Etc.)

Measurable School Performance Objectives

School Performance Objective #1

- Expectation(s)
- Strategy(ies) for attainment
- Progress indicators
- Measurement tool
- Current status

School Performance Objective #2

- (Etc.)

Accountability Questions and Operations

The development of an Accountability Plan is part of an ongoing cycle of **planning** (What are we going to do?), **action** (doing it), and **reflection** (How well did we succeed and what do we need to change?), which takes place within a school. This cycle is perpetual; reflection leads to revising plans and actions as a school moves toward achieving its objectives. The Accountability Plan is a tool for planning, action, and reflection, since each of the common format elements answers one of the key questions that guide the cycle. In the list below, the key questions are tied to the Accountability Plan operation that best answers it.

Questions for Planning Action and Reflection	Accountability Plan Operations
Where do we want to go?	Defining measurable performance objectives for students and school
What do we want to achieve?	Setting academic and nonacademic expectations
How will we get there?	Identifying strategies for attainment of objectives
How will we know we are making progress?	Defining progress indicators
What will we use to measure our progress?	Identifying measurement tools
Where are we now?	Describing current status

After the first year's Accountability Plan is submitted and approved, "current status" will become part of a school's Annual Report, which is due to the state August 1 each year. Thus, examining current status can become the basis for annual reflection on the school's progress towards its objectives. The following reflective questions may be appropriate:

- Have we come far enough this year?
- Can we demonstrate our progress in a credible way to those outside of the school?
- If not, do we need to reconsider the strategies we are using to reach the objectives?
- Have the strategies been adequately implemented?
- Do we need to revise the strategies, reexamine our progress indicators, or think again about how to measure results?

Plan Elements: Explanations, Clues, Examples

Schools should include at least one objective for students and one performance objective for the school. Most schools will have more. At least one student performance objective must be academic; there may be nonacademic objectives as well if they are important to the mission of the school. Performance objectives answer the question: Where do we want to go?

Performance Objectives for Students and Schools

Explanation of Performance Objectives

Performance objectives are the ultimate expectations for achievement and are always keyed to the unique elements of the school's charter. Each objective must be stated in measurable terms, but all performance objectives may not be achieved within the time period of your charter. The state will consider progress over time in evaluating schools.

Developing performance objectives requires thinking about unique elements of the school's charter and mission. Think of setting student performance objectives in terms of, "If this school succeeds, then students will ..."

Tips

- Student performance objectives are often phrased "All students will ..."
- Comparisons of student achievement should be made in terms of student growth over time or in terms of national norms, rather than with students in the district in which the charter school is located. A statement such as "Graduating students will perform at the same level as students graduating from the other Jonestown public schools" is not a valid performance objective because the two student populations are not comparable.

The examples below are illustrative ideas.

Examples

- Student Academic Performance Objective: Students will be prepared for college through proficiency of key subjects in a core curriculum, which is defined as mathematics, science, and English.
- Student Nonacademic Performance Objective: All students will learn citizenship through taking responsibility and working in teams.
- School Performance Objective: The school will be a viable organization in terms of resources, enrollment, and parent perception.

Expectations

Expectations are a more specific expression of performance objectives, stated in measurable terms. Each objective must have at least one expectation attached to it, which is attainable during the five years of the charter. Expectations answer the question: What do we want to achieve?

Explanation of Expectations

Expectations of student academic performance state what students should know and be able to do in specific measurable terms. When referring to nonacademic student performance objectives or school performance objectives, the term "expectations" denotes what is reasonably anticipated.

Developing expectations requires "setting the bar at a high level," but one that is attainable. Think of setting expectations by asking questions such as "How many students can we really expect to reach our desired level of performance in the amount of time that they are attending this school?"

Tips

- Expectations should be measurable within the time frame of your charter.
- Expectations are often expressed quantitatively, such as "Ninety percent of students will achieve proficiency ..." or "Seventy-five percent of graduating students ..." or "By the year 2001, all students ... "
- Expectations are stronger if they include a phrase that states how they will be achieved. For example, "Ninety percent of students will achieve a score of 'excellent' on their exhibitions, using a well-defined rubric.

Expectations are always tied to specific performance objectives as in the examples below.

Examples

- Student Academic Expectation: One hundred percent of students are expected to meet both annual and exit objectives, determined in an individual education plan.
- Student Nonacademic Expectation: All students will become academic or nonacademic role models.
- School Expectation: The school will add a grade each year, meet enrollment projections, and maintain a waiting list.

Strategies for Attainment

Strategies are means that a school uses to meet its objectives. Strategies answer the question: How will we get there?

Explanation of Strategies

Strategies are the means, methods, and approaches by which expectations and performance objectives are met. Many strategies are academic, but they may also be behavioral and some may involve parents and community.

Developing strategies entails examining the performance objectives and thinking about the ways that they will be achieved. Think in terms of, "In order to achieve this objective, we will use or develop these methods, instructional techniques, and/or materials."

Tips

- Performance objectives are ends; strategies are the means to the end.
- Several strategies may be needed to attain a single performance objective and strategies may serve more than one objective.
- The following is a list of frequently used strategies: specific curricula or texts; instructional approaches; student grouping; individualized learning plans; teacher professional development; outside experts in the classroom; student dress or behavior codes; periodic town meetings.

There are many strategies charter schools use to meet their objectives. The examples below are illustrative.

Examples

- School Academic Performance Strategy: Use quality core curricula, such as Reading Recovery and University of Chicago School Mathematics Project.
- Student Nonacademic Performance Strategy: Students achieving proficiency serve as academic leaders who tutor other students. Students may also serve as non-academic leaders with responsibility for organizing certain school projects or areas.
- School Performance Strategy: The school will hold parent meetings in order to establish and reach consensus on expectations parents hold for student performance.

Progress Indicators

Progress indicators are the signposts along the road toward meeting expectations and achieving performance objectives. Progress indicators answer the question: How do we know we are making progress?

Explanation of Progress Indicators

Progress indicators are measurable interim accomplishments that must be achieved in order to meet expectations. For every student performance objective, it is necessary to have progress indicators, although they are not always necessary for school objectives. Progress indicators are annual verification that cumulative progress is being made toward objectives.

Developing progress indicators requires thinking about the educational process and how it can be measured. Think about issues such as "Where do we need students to be at the end of each grade to meet our expectations at graduation?"

Tips

- Progress indicators must be measurable. They are often stated numerically.
- Wherever possible, progress indicators should allow external validation.
- Progress indicators may use such words as "each year" or "at the end of two years," or they may refer to "increase" or "student progress after one year in the school."
- A single performance objective may have several progress indicators.

Progress indicators relate to expectations and performance objectives, as in the examples below.

Examples

- Student Academic Performance Progress Indicators: Annual increase in the number of students meeting expectations, according to standardized tests results and performance-based measures.
- Student Nonacademic Performance Progress Indicator: Annual 5 percent increase in the number of students becoming academic and nonacademic role models each year.
- School Performance Progress Indicator: Annual 10 percent increase in applications by students and teachers; annual increase or status quo in waiting list; 20 percent annual increase in parental activities.

Measurement Tools

Measurement tools are the proof of success and answer the question: How will we know we got there?

Explanation of Measurement Tools

Measurement tools are the means used to evaluate progress toward performance objectives. Most schools use multiple tools for measuring student and school performance, both for planning within the school and for demonstrating success to others. The key elements of any measurement tool are objectivity and credibility.

Describing measurement tools requires thinking about the best sources of evidence that are available to prove that the school is making progress toward its performance objectives. Think of including measurement tools that meet a criterion of "This tool will prove to insiders and reasonably informed outsiders that we are accomplishing our objectives."

Tips

- Subject all measurement tools to the questions: Is this credible? Is this objective?
- Any of following are acceptable measurement tools: standardized tests; district tests; exhibitions of proficiency and/or portfolios, as long as they are accompanied by credible rubrics; outside juries or judges; changes in discipline referrals, school attendance, or dropout rates; rate of students attending two- or four-year colleges.
- Standardized tests are not the only measurement tool for judging student achievement, but the results are extremely credible to outsiders and may be required.

It is important that each performance objective be measured by some tool that indicates demonstrable progress. The examples below give some illustrative ideas.

Examples

- Student Academic Performance Measurement: Pre- and post-Iowa tests for all students. (Use of the MEAP in grades four and eight, report cards, final examinations in English and mathematics. Performance-based assessments in science.)
- Student Nonacademic Performance Measurement: Students will earn Student Life Points through serving as a role model. These points will be tallied at the end of the year to show student progress toward becoming leaders.
- School Performance Measurement: Parent and teacher surveys, enrollment records, teacher applications, number of students on waiting list.

Current Status

A report of current status is closely tied to progress indicators, which are described on an earlier page. The report of current status answers the question: Where are we now?

Explanation of Current Status

Current status tells where the school is, in measurable terms, at the end of each academic year in meeting its objectives. In the Accountability Plan, a school may report baseline data as the current status.

Appraising current status requires honestly facing up to success and failure and saying, "This is where we are."

Tips

- At the end of the first year, current status is generally baseline, such as student scores on standardized tests at the time they enter the school. Baseline data means the status of performance before the charter school has had any effects. It says, "We're starting here."
- After the first year, current status is tied to progress indicators. For example, if the progress indicator is that at the end of the fifth grade, all students will complete journals, then the current status report might say, "Ninety percent of students completed journals; the others have signed contracts to complete them by September."

The examples below give some illustrative ideas for reporting current status.

Examples

- Current Status or Student Academic Performance (Baseline Data): As of September 1996, 62 percent of students were below grade level in mathematics and 56 percent below grade level in reading.
- Current Status of Student Nonacademic Performance: All teachers are trained and are training students in the role model system.
- Current Status of School Performance: In 1995, we opened as a K–7 school; in 1996 we will open as a K–8 school. There were 150 teacher applications at the time the school opened. The number of students on the waiting list is currently 53.

Tool II: Work and Example Sheets

The following pages are intended to help in the process of moving from understanding Accountability Plans to developing one. The first part of this section is an annotated worksheet, containing words and phrases that may be used to express the elements of the plan. The second part of the section shows how an Accountability Plan really looks, using the same basic examples from previous pages and presenting them in an integrated and sequential way. Like an actual Accountability Plan, it contains multiple expectations, strategies, performance indicators, measurement tools, and expressions of current status. Note how brief the plan is. An Accountability Plan is expected to be no more than 10 to 12 pages, including a very brief introduction describing the mission and key features of the school. All supporting documentation, including rubric samples of tests and student work, should appear in appendices.

Annotated Worksheet

The following worksheet is annotated to provide some guidance in developing an Accountability Plan.

Student Performance Objective: Students will (achieve, master, and be successful at) (core curriculum subjects, basic skills, and higher-order thinking skills).

Expectations

- _____ percent of students will attain_____level of proficiency in _____at (graduation).
- _____ percent of graduating students will achieve_____, as shown by_____ .

Strategy(ies) for Attainment

- A curriculum will be (developed, adopted) that _____ .

Progress Indicators

- (_____Number, percent) of (all, grade 6) students are expected to perform at or above grade level (according to the _____).
- Increased achievement shown by (report card or Individualized Education Plan or written response by teachers) at the end of grades _____ .

Measurement Tools

- _____ standardized test administered at grade levels _____.
- (Exhibitions, portfolios), scored by rubrics (developed, adopted) at grade levels _____.

Current Status

- Diagnostic placement tests used with all students at admission show that students are performing (above/below) grade level in _____ (core curriculum subjects).

Student Academic Performance Objective: Students will be prepared for college through proficiency of key subjects in a core curriculum, which is defined as mathematics, science, and English.

Complete Examples by Performance Objectives

Expectations

- 100 percent of students are expected to meet both annual and exit objectives in core subjects, determined in an Individual Education Plan (IEP)
- 75 percent of students will score at the level of 750 or above on the PSAT

Strategies

- Use of quality core curricula, such as Reading Recovery and University of Chicago School Mathematics Project
- Special classes after school will offer students additional preparation for the PSAT
- IEPs will be reviewed with parents, students, and teachers at least once a year

Progress Indicators

- Annual increase in number of students meeting expectations according to standardized test results and performance-based measures
- The number of students who choose to take the SAT each year

Measurement Tools

- Pre- and post-Iowa tests for all students. Use of the MEAP in grades four and eight report cards. Final examinations in mathematics and English at every grade level. Performance-based assessments in science at grade six.
- Surveys will be sent to graduates who reach college, asking them to rate their preparation.

Current Status

- (Baseline Data) As of September 1996, 62 percent of students were below grade level in mathematics and 56 percent below grade level in reading. A baseline for science is being established.
- 57 percent of students signed up for the special after-school SAT preparation classes at the time they enrolled in the school.
- IEPs have been completed with all entering students and reviewed with parents.

Student Nonacademic Performance Objective: All students will learn citizenship through taking responsibility and working in teams.

Expectations

- 75 percent of students will become academic leaders during their years in this school
- 100 percent of students will become nonacademic leaders during their years in the school

Strategies

- Students will study in teams headed by an academic leader who will provide academic leadership
- Student government will include specific training in citizenship

Progress Indicators

- Yearly increase in the percent of students becoming academic and nonacademic prefects
- 10 percent annual increase in number of students engaged in student government

Measurement Tools

- Students will earn Life Points, which will show progress by each student in citizenship
- Annual student survey on aspects of citizenship and responsibility

Current Status

- All teachers are trained and are teaching students the elements of the system
- A student government handbook has been developed and is being incorporated into the social studies curriculum

School Performance Objective: The school will be a viable organization in terms of resources, enrollment, and parent participation.

Expectations

- The school will add a grade each year, meet enrollment projections, and maintain a waiting list
- 50 percent of funds needed for expansion will be raised by parents working with school administrators
- 80 percent of parents will be involved in some kind of parent activity

Strategies

- The school will hold parent meetings in order to establish and come to consensus on parent expectations for student achievement
- A professional fund-raiser will be brought in as a consultant to parental groups
- New and additional parent activities will be added each year, based on the interests of parents

Progress Indicators

- Annual 10 percent increase in applications by students and teachers; annual increase or status quo in waiting list
- Annual 20 percent increase in number of parents taking part in parent activities

Measurement Tools

- Parent and teacher surveys, teacher applications, number of students on waiting list
- Amount of money raised by parents

Current Status

- In 1995 we opened as a K–8 school. There were 150 teacher applications at the time school opened. The number of students on the waiting list is 53.
- We have held initial conversations with a fund-raising consultant and some parent leaders.

Tool III: Sample Accountability Plan

School: Jefferson Academy Charter School
District: Jefferson County Public School District R-1
School Address: 9955 Yarrow Street
City: Broomfield State: CO Zip Code: 80021
Telephone: 438-1011
Date: June 2, 1995
Principal: E. Munier

I. School Profile (Who Are We?)

Location (check one): Urban _____ Suburban _X_ Rural _____

Student Characteristics

Number of students: District: 84,145 increasing by 1.6 percent for one year

Building: 189 increasing by 100 percent for one year

Racial/Ethnic Breakdown

American Indian: 2 Caucasian/Non-Hispanic: 178

Black: 3 Pacific Islander: 0

Asian: 2 Hispanic: 4

Special education population: 10 (identified)

Community Characteristics

Please describe your community using such factors as:

_____Socioeconomic level

_____Education level of parents

_____Mobility

_____Record of community volunteer activities

_____Participation in such programs as Aid to Dependent Children and Chapter 1

_____Family status

(Indicate which characteristics from the list above you will describe in your narrative)

Jefferson County Pubic School District R–1 is the largest school district in terms of student population in the state of Colorado. The county covers an area of nearly 785 square miles. The main communities in the county are: Arvada, Broomfield, Golden, Lakewood, Littleton, Westminster, and Wheat Ridge.

Jefferson Academy was organized by parents who were seeking a more traditional and fundamental approach to education for their children. The school was approved by the Jefferson County School Board in May of 1994. The first actual day of operation was August 29, 1994. The school is located in the old Juchem Elementary School site in Broomfield. The school serves 189 students, kindergarten (two half-day programs) through sixth grade. There is a substantial waiting list of well over 400 students. Jefferson Academy is sharing the Juchem site with a Jefferson County Public School preschool program.

Economic levels within the school are as follows: 1.6% < $25K; 54.6% < $50K; 32% < $75K, and 11.7% > $75K. Ninety-one percent of our parents have some college-level education, and 57.7 percent have at least a four-year college degree or greater. Mobility in our first year was 1.5 percent. Over 6,000 hours of parent volunteer hours have been served in the school's fist year. The free and reduced-lunch program serves 50 percent of our families. Five percent of the students are staffed for special education, with an anticipated increase of 10–12 percent in staffing for the upcoming school year. Amazingly, 95 percent of our students come from two-parent families.

Faculty/Staff Characteristics

Certified Staff: Total Number: 11+1 (see other)

Education: (please indicate number of staff in each category)

BA: 10 EDD/PHD: 0

MA: 2 BS: 0

Other: 1 (Certification waiver—certificate pending, holds BA)

Years of Experience Teaching:
(please indicate number of staff in each category)

Less than 6 years: 4

6–10 years: 5

11–15 years: 2

More than 15 years: 0

American Indian: 0

Pacific Islander: 0

Black: 0

Hispanic: 0

Asian: 0

Faculty Usage

The faculty and administration consist of seven regular classroom teachers, three one-third-time special teachers (PE, Music, and Art), one special education teacher (EC/PC), one part-time speech and language therapist, and one principal/administrator. The classroom teachers are responsible for student instruction in a self-contained environment. The primary curriculum used in reading and math is the Open Court series, and social studies, science, and fine arts are driven by the Core Knowledge Foundation's Curriculum Series. The pupil/teacher ratio is maintained at 26 to 1, although the school does maintain educational assistants in every classroom for 5 to 7 hours per day. The principal is the instructional, administrative, operational, and organizational leader in the school. The Board of Directors and staff work in conjunction with the principal to establish educational policies and procedures as well as set goals, develop programs, and determine appropriate methods and material to accomplish the mission of Jefferson Academy.

The classified staff includes seven classroom aides (educational assistants), one school secretary, one playground supervisor, one clinic aide, and one custodian. The educational assistants support the classroom teachers with clerical duties, working with small groups, and recess supervision. The school secretary attends to all school office duties and needs, and maintains all school records per district standards. The clinic aide attends to minor medical emergencies and administers student medication and medical action plans. The custodian works in conjunction with the district-paid building engineer and maintains all classrooms and facilities for a safe and clean school environment.

Organizational Structure of the School

Jefferson Academy operates under a charter school contract that was negotiated between the Board of Directors of Jefferson Academy and the Jefferson County Public School District. The charter school law enables parents, teachers, or organizations to establish new, innovative, and experimental ways to educate children within the public system, resulting in more options for the students and families. Jefferson Academy has a Board of Directors that consists of seven members (six parents and the principal), and this Board is solely responsible for all aspects of the school. The Board of Directors is responsible for its own operations, which include all fiscal, personnel, administrative, operational, and educational aspects of the school.

Assisting the Board of Directors are the two standing committees: Teacher Review and Accountability. Additional committees have been convened as needed in the following areas: Business Development, Publicity, Fund Raising, and Technology. These committees report to the Board on an as-needed basis.

Educational Program

The mission of Jefferson Academy is to help students attain their highest social and academic potential through an academically rigorous, content-rich educational program.

The mission will be accomplished through the use of the Core Knowledge Foundation's scope and sequence and a fundamental, "back-to-basics" approach. Thus, Jefferson Academy emphasizes the teaching of basic skills with a traditional and conventional approach in a self-contained educational environment. Our academically-oriented program is organized so that the entire class generally works as a single group on grade-level material with ability grouping where necessary. Emphasis is placed on the basic foundations necessary for an academically sound education: reading (with emphasis on phonics), mathematics, English, geometry, geography, history, government, penmanship, spelling, fine arts, physical education, and science. Homework is assigned on a regular basis with the goal of strengthening and/or enriching daily work.

Strict discipline and order is maintained; students are expected to respect authority, accept responsibility, respect the rights of others, take care of their own property, and be careful with the property of others.

Assessment includes teacher observations; evaluation of regular assignments and student product; teacher-made tests; report cards; standardized, norm- and criterion-referenced tests; and student portfolios.

II. Criteria for Award

For criteria A through E, please complete information related to:

Where did we begin?

Provide data to support the current student academic performance for your school in each of the three State of Board of Education goal areas and additional goal areas (as appropriate). Indicate community satisfaction levels. Disaggregate the data for racial/ethnic and gender subpopulations where possible.

Where are we going?

List goals/objectives you have set for the coming year related to the State Board of Education goals, your district priorities, and your community needs.

How do we get there?

Briefly describe methods and activities.

How do we know we are there?

Indicate the measures you will use to indicate progress toward your goals. A two-year history is required. Build into your measurement design disaggregation of data and use of performance-based measures where possible.

A. Graduation Rate

1. **Where did we begin?** The 1994–95 school year was Jefferson Academy's first full year of operation. Baseline data was derived from teacher observations, past documentation, parent input, and standardized tests results to identify the abilities and needs of our students in relation to the goals, objectives, and expectations of the school and its curriculum. Teachers made adjustments as needed for individual students.

    - Gender differences have been identified among second-grade students at Jefferson Academy in reading and word analysis. Per standardized tests administered in the fall, females scored higher males in the respective areas (normal curve equivalent means):

	Reading (2nd Grade)	Word Analysis (2nd Grade)
Males	30.15	29.69
Females	42.61	39.00

    - At-risk students are identified as students performing at least one year above or below grade level (Federal Chapter 2 definition). Through teacher observation and formal evaluation of student performance, it has been determined that:

        — 34.5 percent of Jefferson Academy's K–5 student population is at risk

        — 6 percent of the students are performing at least one year below grade level in the five major areas of achievement (vocabulary, reading, language, work/study, and math)

        — 28.5 percent of the students are performing at least one year above grade level in the five major areas of achievement (vocabulary, reading, language, work/study, and math).

2. **Where are we going?** Through analysis of the above data, Jefferson Academy has adopted the following graduation rate goals:

    - Jefferson Academy will be able to document by July 1, 1996, that specific changes and adjustments will have been made to instruc-

tional methods to reduce gender differences in performance among students from the 1994–95 second-grade class. As a result, identified students will demonstrate a 20 percent increase in performance in those areas where discrepancies by gender exist.

- Jefferson Academy staff will be able to document by July 1, 1996, that at least 50 percent of the students continuously enrolled and performing at least one year below grade level will be performing at grade level. Additionally, 75 percent of the students performing at least one year above grade level will show more than the expected nine months of academic growth.

3. **How do we get there?** The mission of Jefferson Academy is to help students attain their highest social and academic potential through an academically rigorous, content-rich educational program. As a result of this mission, Jefferson Academy has adopted challenging content standards in all instructional areas. Our traditional delivery system and enriching core knowledge program will be used to meet student needs and thus accomplish the above stated goals.

4. **How do we know we are there?** We will know we have accomplished our goals when Jefferson Academy can document by July 1, 1996, that:

   - Identified students will demonstrate a 20 percent increase in performance in those areas where discrepancies by gender exist.

   - Fifty percent of the students performing one year below grade level and continuously enrolled will be performing at grade level by July 1, 1996. Additionally, 75 percent of the students performing at least one year above grade level will show more than the expected nine months of academic growth.

B. Attendance Rate

1. **Where did we begin?** Parents have made a significant decision to have their children attend Jefferson Academy. In the spring of 1995, Jefferson Academy families listed the following reasons for enrolling in the school in our 1994–1995 school survey (180 responded to this section).

   - 146 responses: I wanted higher standards and expectations held for all students

   - 140 responses: I wanted a traditional, "back to basics" system

   - 135 responses: I wanted a more disciplined classroom and school environment

- 108 responses: The current school system was not meeting my child's needs
- 103 responses: The current school system was not responsive to my concerns as a parent
- 75 responses: I wanted a smaller school community
- 20 responses: Other

Additionally, the following data was collected:

- 97 percent of the parents agree that the school meets their student's needs
- 97 percent of the parents agree that they are well informed about what is being taught
- 97 percent of the students like coming to Jefferson Academy
- 243 parents have volunteered 6,000 hours in the 1994–95 school year (or 24.69 hours per volunteer)

The current attendance rate is 96.4 percent.

2. **Where are we going?** It is the goal of Jefferson Academy to maintain an attendance rate of 95 percent or better. This will be accomplished by the following:
   - Maintain or increase the percentage of students who like coming to Jefferson Academy
   - Maintain or increase the percentage of parents who agree that they are well informed about what is being taught
   - Maintain or increase the average number of volunteer hours served in the school
3. **How do we get there?**
   - When absences occur, teachers will make contact with the student and parents within one school day. This will ensure that make-up work is clearly assigned so that the impact on overall school work will be minimized and the student will not be overwhelmed by make-up work upon returning to school.
   - Students will be recognized each semester for perfect attendance through classroom awards given out by the principal.
   - Students will be recognized for good work and behavior.

- Student work will be displayed in the classroom and main hall.
- Students with absences in excess of 5 percent will be contacted by the teacher and/or principal to determine causes for absences. Strategies will be developed to help the student improve absenteeism.
- Parent involvement will continue to be encouraged and more opportunities will be developed for parent involvement.
- Continue newsletter efforts to communicate the philosophy, expectations, and curriculum of the school.

4. **How do we know we are there?** When the school is able to document by July 1, 1996 that:

   - 97 percent or more of the parents agree that the school meets their student's needs
   - 97 percent or more of the parents agree that they are well informed about what is being taught
   - 97 percent or more of the students liked coming to Jefferson Academy

   Parents will have volunteered, on the average, 24.69 or more hours per individual parent in the 1995–96 school year.

C. Student Achievement Rate

1. **Where did we begin?** Per our parent survey, 67 percent of our families felt their children's academic needs were not being met in their previous school; 11 percent had no opinion. Jefferson Academy administered the Iowa Test of Basic Skills the first week of September 1994. The results of the Normal Curve Equivalent percentile means were as follows:

	Vocabulary	Reading	Spelling	Word Anal.	Math
First Grade	41.03	NA	54.61	42.80	66.53
Second Grade	40.15	36.38	52.30	34.34	43.19
	Vocabulary	**Reading**	**Language**	**Work/Study**	**Math**
Third Grade	44.44	50.69	46.44	44.22	41.88
Fourth Grade	51.18	42.22	45.50	44.59	48.59
Fifth Grade	54.50	46.67	52.03	50.42	52.34
Sixth Grade	64.00	62.66	53.86	54.20	56.13

These results, in addition to teacher observations, would suggest that achievement and skills were generally below average.

2. **Where are we going?** By July 1, 1996, Jefferson Academy will document that:

   - Using the ITBS evaluation, the vocabulary, reading, language (spelling in grades 1 and 2), work/study, and math for those students continuously enrolled for the reporting period, will have improved a minimum of 5 national percentile points based on the NCE mean analysis.
   - Portfolios will have been developed to show student growth over time. The portfolios will include results of standardized tests, criterion-referenced tests, teacher-made tests, report cards, student work samples, and any additional samples of work that help to analyze performance and achievement.
   - The percent of continually enrolled at-risk students will have been reduced by at least 5 percent, thus reducing the at-risk population to 29.5 percent.
   - The ITBS Survey edition will be administered annually to each student in grades 1–6, and 75 percent of the continuously enrolled

students for the reporting period will score at or above predicted ability/grade levels in both reading and math as measured by the ITBS.

3. **How do we get there?** Jefferson Academy will achieve the stated goals by doing the following:

   - Teachers will develop strategies especially aimed at improving the reading, language, and math skills of those students in the first and second quartiles of the respective sub-tests
   - Teachers in grades 1–6 will set up incentive systems to encourage additional reading at home, beyond normal homework levels
   - Jefferson Academy will continue to set high expectations and help parents to establish the same expectations at home
   - Staff will focus on additional inservice activities and staff development activities that will increase their abilities to challenge and meet the needs of all students in the reading, language, and math areas
   - Jefferson Academy will further develop the school library so that it provides resources for students and their families in the reading and language areas

4. **How do we know we are there**? Jefferson Academy staff will be able to document by July 1, 1996, that the goals identified in section 2 above (Where are we going?) have been attained as stated.

D. Additional Goals

1. **Where did we begin?** Jefferson Academy is without appropriate computer technology and is in final planning stages to purchase systems that will serve our school community and its unique needs. Upon funding from the school district and additional fund raising by our PTO and Business Development Committee, Jefferson Academy will install an adequate technology plan by the end of the first academic quarter of 1995.

2. **Where are we going?** Within six months of final installation of a major portion of the computer technology plan for Jefferson Academy, 75 percent or more of the students in grades 3–6 will be able to create and produce a product using visual, audio, or printed means that relates to or supports their curriculum.

3. **How do we get there?** Teachers will receive training and be scheduled into the computer lab following a plan to be determined by the staff. Additional paid and volunteer staff with specialization in the use of technology and computers in an educational setting will be sought to assist classroom teachers with this process.

4. **How do we know we are there?**

Third Grade: Students will write and print a short story, and will illustrate the story on the computer. Students will illustrate scientific concepts with a printed product. Students will enter data into a spreadsheet, and prompt the computer to plot a chart. Students will be proficient at researching through the use of CD-ROM resources.

Fourth Grade: Students will monitor individualized growth in the use of the keyboard by analyzing individualized graphs and charts. Students will enter data into a spreadsheet table, analyze the pattern, and complete the table. Students will type and print a short story with the illustration(s). Students will be very proficient at researching through the use of CD-ROM resources.

Fifth Grade: Students will type and print assignments for language arts, science and social studies, Students will use a spell-checker program. Students will use desktop publishing techniques to generate a newspaper-style printout. Students will use a spreadsheet, record data, and prompt the computer to plot a graph. Students will generate illustration for a nonfiction piece of writing. Students will be very proficient at researching through the use of CD-ROM resources.

Sixth Grade: Students will set up a database, enter data, sort, and select. Students will set up a spreadsheet, enter data, and prompt the computer to plot a graph. Students will generate illustrations of scientific concepts. Students will use technology to generate printed products in a classroom newspaper project. Students will be very proficient at researching through the use of CD-ROM resources.

E. Community Satisfaction with School Performance

1. **Where did we begin?** Jefferson Academy is a school of choice. As stated in the Attendance section of this document, parents had very definite thoughts in regards to becoming involved with Jefferson Academy. The primary reasons, in rank order, were as follows:

    1. I wanted higher standards and expectations held for all students
    2. I wanted a traditional, "back-to-basics" system
    3. I wanted a more disciplined classroom and school environment
    4. The current school system was not meeting my child's needs
    5. The current school system was not responsive to my concerns as a parent
    6. I wanted a smaller school community

2. **Where are we going?** Jefferson Academy will be able to document by July 1, 1996, that at least 90 percent of Jefferson Academy's K–6 grade families re-enroll their children in the school for the following year, excluding the children of those families who move out of the Jefferson County Public School District.

3. **How do we get there?** Jefferson Academy will continue to serve our constituency and respond to their suggestions and needs. Parent surveys will be administered yearly to assess general and specific satisfaction in the following areas: curriculum, instruction and assessment; school climate; administrative staff effectiveness; and communication. Jefferson Academy will also educate parents on the philosophy, curriculum, and methods prescribed in our charter agreement through parent "coffees" with the principal. These discussions and chats will allow parents a place to process their concerns as well as their joys.

4. **How do we know we are there?** Jefferson Academy will be able to document by July 1, 1996, that at least 90 percent of Jefferson Academy's families re-enroll their children in the school for the following year, excluding the children of those families who move out of the Jefferson County Public School District.

F. **Effective School Practices.** Provide a brief narrative description of your school's practices in at least four of the areas listed below.

- Vision
- Beliefs about learning
- Diversity of education options
- Focus on student performance outcomes
- Parent and community involvement
- Safe school and student discipline
- Use of technology
- Early intervention in high-risk situations
- Other correlates of restructured and effective schooling

1. **Vision.** The mission of Jefferson Academy is to help students attain their highest social and academic potential through an academically rigorous, content-rich educational program. The board and staff strategically plan with that vision in mind at all times. The school also has stated goals in the parent handbook that stress development of students in academic, physical, artistic, social, and emotional areas.

2. **Beliefs about learning.** Jefferson Academy will encourage and provide growth in basic skills using a fundamental approach and utilizing the core knowledge scope and sequence so that we can enable the students to be self-realized and productive citizens. We believe that students can learn at much higher levels given a more challenging educational environment.

   The staff of Jefferson Academy continually evaluates the curriculum and related methods and materials based on the following criteria:

   - It is desirable that the curriculum be written from a Core Knowledge and Fundamental perspective
   - The curriculum should be traditional and conventional in nature, utilizing proven advances in methods in the field of education
   - The curriculum delivery system must be teacher-centered, allowing the teacher to exercise personal giftedness and judgement in applying the curriculum, methods, and materials

3. **Focus on student performance outcomes.** The curriculum of Jefferson Academy is structured to focus on specific content giving specific results. Integration of a wide range of disciplines and a focus on a specific range of core knowledge has led us to specific content standards in each subject area. These content standards will allow our students to experience success as students and citizens.

4. **Parent involvement and participation** is critically important at Jefferson Academy. Two hundred forty-three (243) parents have volunteered 6,000 hours in the 1994–95 school year (or 24.69 hours per volunteer). The school is committed in policy and practice to including parents and families in the educational process whenever possible.

5. **Safe school and student discipline.** Jefferson Academy has a strict discipline policy and procedure. One of the most important lessons for any student to learn is how to respect authority, respect the rights of others, and take care of his or her own and other's property. Additionally, no student will be allowed to disrupt the education of other students. Although it is necessary to have school and classroom rules, our emphasis is not on "do's and don'ts," but guiding the student to a

proper response to any given situation. In order to accomplish this, we have set discipline standards that are enforced fairly and consistently.

Since the classroom teacher is the one who works most closely with the children, he or she carries the bulk of the discipline responsibility. It is important that the teacher works closely with the parents in these matters and that communications are open and honest. It is of utmost importance that the teacher and parents work together as a team in discipline matters. Jefferson Academy has four school rules that promote a safe environment:

- Keep all communications honoring to one another
- Keep your hands and feet to yourself
- Respect and obey all supervising adults
- Be a good caretaker of all things

6. **Use of technology.** Jefferson Academy is committed to a technology plan that will prepare our students for the 21st century.

7. **Early intervention in high-risk situations.** Jefferson Academy has employed exceptional staff who are particularly sensitive to the needs of any high-risk student. Teachers work closely with the student, parents, special education teacher, and principal to help design a program that meets the needs of the students who might be at risk. Portfolios and other informal and formal assessments are used to assess progress and to help keep the family well informed. Jefferson Academy seeks to intervene early in the educational experience of the student, usually kindergarten through third grade. This gives the student a better chance of being helped before problems adversely effect the student's educational success.

   The academy is also served by the Central Assessment Team. This team consists of an educational consultant, nurse, speech therapist, psychologist, language diagnostician, and social worker. Staffing and evaluations are only by referral and with signed consent of the parents of the student.

III. What Have We Accomplished?

Describe the means by which your school reports progress toward its goals to the State Board of Education and to the public.

1. Staff produces weekly letters, which are sent home, thus keeping families informed.
2. The principal meets weekly with parents at a parent coffee for discussion and input.
3. Open Board of Directors meetings occur every moth except July.
4. The principal attends monthly principal meetings at the district level and monthly area principal articulation meetings.
5. Two accountability committee members attend monthly district accountability meetings.
6. The school has an improvement plan in place and will be updating it annually.
7. The school will publish an annual year-end report to the public with all required components.
8. A report to parents on overall test results is published annually, with K–6 group results and individual results.
9. Jefferson Academy submits a semi-annual report to the Jefferson County Public School District Board of Education in November and March of each school year.
10. Jefferson Academy responds to many requests to visit the school and conducts interviews about the philosophy, curriculum, and structure of the school. Many of those interviews have been published or are used in open discussion throughout the United States.

Submitted by:

Principal	Date
Governing Board President	Date
Superintendent	Date
Local Board President	Date

Approved by:

State Board of Education Chairperson	Date

Tool IV: Annual Site Visit Protocol for Charter Schools

Charter schools are the most accountable public schools in the Commonwealth because they must demonstrate good results within five years or lose their charter. Annual site visits of charter schools are one of the means the Department of Education will use to document each school's accomplishments. As with all other elements of the accountability process, site visits will be guided by three central questions:

1. **Is the academic program a success?** An affirmative answer would be based on evidence that the school has made reasonable progress in meeting internally established goals over four years, and that student performance significantly improved and/or is persistently strong on internal and external academic assessments.

2. **Is the school a viable organization?** "Yes" would mean that the school is financially solvent and stable, enrollment is stable and near capacity, school governance is sound, and professional staff are competent and resourceful.

3. **Is the school faithful to the terms of its charter?** If the school's program and operation are consistent with the terms of its charter, and if the school is within the bounds of essential statutory and regulatory requirements, then the answer will be yes.

Because we want to answer these standard questions without trampling on the unique character and mission of each school, the Commonwealth is working with charter schools to develop an accountability contract for each school. This contract will describe clear, concrete and measurable school performance objectives. These objectives will reflect an emphasis on student achievement, but may also pertain to student attendance, parental satisfaction and participation, safety and order, mobilization of private resources, school environment, staff development, facility improvement, or fiscal management.

This accountability contract will also describe the measures the school will use to document progress toward those objectives, including credible student assessment tools for annually tracking student performance. Charter schools report their objectives and progress toward them in the annual report due August 1 of each year.

The purpose of annual site visits is to augment and verify the information contained in the annual report. Site visits will also help educate the general public about the charter school initiative and provide a charter school with critical feedback from a jury of objective peers. These day-long site visits will be led

by the Department's Charter School Office and will be conducted by a small group of Massachusetts citizens who are not involved in the school, including one parent, teacher, school leader, business person, and public official. Visitors will tour the school and meet with the board of trustees, school director, teachers, students, and others.

Annual Site Visit Protocol for Charter Schools Format

Time	Duration	Category	Notes
8:00–9:30	1 hour	Board of Trustees	A representative group is sufficient; all board members need not be present.
9:30–10:30	1 hour	School Director and Tour of Facility (meet with library, media, health, finance, personal)	Orientation and discussion, after which some team members may visit classrooms, with others talking with staff (e.g., library, health, and finance personnel).
10:30–11:30	1 hour	Students	Six students with samples of their best work about which they are prepared to talk. (Younger students may be accompanied by a teacher.) Some team members may continue classroom visits.
11:30–12:30	1 hour	Teachers and Staff* Parents* * These meetings may be held concurrently.	Three to six teachers from various grade levels and disciplines; three to six parents.
12:30–2:00	1.5 hours	Site Visit Team	Conversation about the team's opinions, observations, and conclusions.
2:00–3:00	1 hour	School Director	Wrap-up meeting to discuss the team's observations.
	Total=6.5 hours		

The schedule will be coordinated by the school. The order is not critical and can be adapted to fit the needs of the school.

Annual Site Visit Protocol for Charter Schools: Essential Questions

Is the academic program a success?

- Is the school's curriculum based on high academic standards, both in terms of content and performance?
- Has student performance improved or been persistently strong on internal and external assessments?

Is the school a viable organization?

- Are the school's purposes and objectives clear and thoroughly understood by those connected with the school-governing body, professional staff, students, and parents?
- Is the school safe?
- Are the physical facilities adequate for the program of the school?
- Does the school have appropriate controls and procedures for the management of financial resources?
- Professional staff members are qualified by training and/or experience in the areas to which they are assigned?
- Does the school have an effective governance structure and administrative organization for carrying out the purposes and objectives of the school?
- Are parents satisfied with the performance of the school?

Is the school faithful to the terms of its charter?

- Do the school's curriculum, program, and activities seem consistent with essential legal and regulatory requirements?
- Is the school becoming the school it promised to become in its charter?

Annual Site Visit Protocol for Charter Schools: Interview Questions

Board of Trustees

- Describe the school's mission and purposes.
- Describe this school as you might at an informational session.
- Describe the roles and responsibilities of the board.
- How do you know your school's academic program is successful?
- Describe a recent policy decision made by the board. How was the matter initiated and by whom? What was the procedure used by the board? What was the decision? How was this action made known to those affected?
- How does the board evaluate the performance of the school leader? How are their conclusions transmitted to that person and by whom?

- What is the policy of the board regarding possible conflicts of interest between board members in their roles as members of that body and in their business or professional roles?
- What are the school's greatest accomplishments and challenges?
- What did you learn last year that you have been able to use to your advantage this year?
- Is there information not presented in the annual report that you think is of particular importance to the team?

School Director

- What is the mission of the school?
- Is the mission clear and understood by those connected with the school: trustees, staff parents, and students?
- Describe the school as you might at an informational session.
- Describe the decisionmaking process in the school.
- Describe your relationship with the board of trustees.
- What are your school's budget and financial control procedures?
- Describe the school's curriculum, with examples of content and performance standards for key grade levels.
- How did students perform in your first year? Please refer to specific test scores, attendance records, etc.
- How is the progress of each student evaluated?
- What are the school's greatest accomplishments and challenges?
- What did you learn last year that you have been able to use to your advantage this year?
- Is there information not presented in the annual report that you think is of particular importance to the team?

Teachers

- Describe the school's mission and purposes.
- Describe the school as you might at an informational session.
- What training and experience do you bring to your position?

- What do you value about teaching at this school?
- What is unique about this school's philosophy or approach?
- What are your goals for your students?
- How are this school's expectations communicated to teachers?
- How do you assess each student's needs, work, and progress?
- What kinds of curriculum planning and coordination occur at the school level?

Students

- How old are you and what grade are you in?
- How would you describe this school to a friend?
- Where did you go to school before you came to this school?
- Are you a better student than you were at your previous school?
- Do you have more or less homework than your previous school?
- How safe is your school?
- How are your teachers?
- Explain the assignment that you have brought with you.
- How long did it take you?
- What kind of help did you get?
- What changes did you make?
- What did you like about this assignment?
- What did you learn by doing this project/assignment? Explain.

Parents

- How many children do you have at the school?
- How old are they?
- Why did you choose to send your child(ren) to this school?
- What do you understand the school's mission to be?
- How would you describe the school to a neighbor?

- Where did your children attend school previously?
- How active are you in this school as compared to your child(ren)'s previous school?
- How would you evaluate the safety of this school?
- How would you assess your child's interest in learning?
- What are this school's greatest strength and greatest weakness?
- What do you consider the most important knowledge and skills your child(ren) should acquire?
- How is the school meeting this challenge?
- Are your family's expectations of the school being met?

Note: This protocol was developed in consultation with the Hudson Institute; National Association of Independent Schools; New England Association of Schools and Colleges Inc.; Performance Assessment Collaborative for Education; and Pioneer Institute for Public Policy Research.

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Program Evaluation and Student Assessment

Objective/Purpose of Evaluation

Evaluation and assessment systems serve multiple needs:

- To clarify goals
- To monitor progress
- To support the improvement of teaching and learning
- To inform the public
- To influence education policy

Program Evaluation Standards

Sound evaluations of educational programs, projects, and materials in a variety of settings should have four basic attributes:

- Utility
- Feasibility
- Propriety
- Accuracy

Utility The utility standards ensure that an evaluation will serve the information needs of intended users.

Feasibility These standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation will be realistic, prudent, diplomatic, and frugal.

Propriety The propriety standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation will be conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard for the welfare of those involved in the evaluation, as well as those affected by its results.

Accuracy The accuracy standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation will reveal and convey technically adequate information about the features that determine worth of the program being evaluated.

School Evaluation

Charter schools will be held accountable to the progress they make in relation to the goals established in their charter. Although the primary emphasis may be on improved student outcomes, schools will also need to establish goals in relation to community involvement, operations, finance, and so forth. In some states a decision of whether to renew a charter will be based on a simple and straightforward evaluation that is guided by three central questions:

1. Is the academic program a success?
    - Has the school made reasonable progress in meeting internally established goals over its years of operation?
    - Is student performance significantly improved and/or persistently strong on internal and external academic assessments?
2. Is the school a viable organization?
    - Is the school financially solvent and stable?
    - Is enrollment stable and near capacity?
    - Is school governance sound, and are professional staff competent and resourceful?
3. Is the school faithful to the terms of its charter?
    - Are the school's program and operation consistent with the terms of its charter?
    - Is the school within the bounds of essential statutory and regulatory requirements?

Types of Evaluation

Formative Evaluation

Formative evaluation is used to provide information to improve the charter schools by assessing their ongoing activities. It should be conducted continuously throughout the duration of a school's existence. Typical questions that would be asked within the context of formative evaluation include:

- Is the school being operated as proposed/authorized?
- Were the appropriate persons selected and included in the planned activities?
- Is the school management plan being followed or adjusted for defensible reasons?

- Are the students moving toward the anticipated/planned goals?
- Which elements/factors of the school are aiding students to move toward these goals?
- Are the resources being appropriately directed to fulfill the goals of the school?

Summative Evaluation

Within the framework of summative evaluation (done at the end of the program), the following questions would be appropriate to consider:

- Did the school meet its goals and the goals of the initiative?
- Have the needs of the students and the community been met?
- Can the school and the initiative be continued/perpetuated under existing conditions?
- Were there unintended or unanticipated outcomes as a result of this school? What are their values and their merits?

Steps for Conducting an Evaluation

a. Focus on program goals and objectives as a guide for evaluation

b. Identify school components to be evaluated

c. Define evaluation uses and users

d. Select indicators of success/define criteria for evaluating each component

e. Collect information on results related to criteria for each component

f. Analyze and use information for continuous improvement

Student Assessment

Student assessment is the process of measuring the extent to which a school has improved the quality of student performance. The success of charter schools will be judged primarily on their ability to demonstrate progress toward the student outcomes specified in their charters.

Aligning Standards, Assessment, and Curriculum with School Vision/Mission

Know who you are first, then create and find standards, curriculum, and assessments to match and elaborate on that vision. Whether developing student outcomes for the first time or reviewing previous ones, the process for developing standards at the school level includes four key steps:

1. The charter school standards team (which could consist of teachers, parents, and administrators) reviews the school's mission to reflect on what its purpose is, whom it hopes to serve, and what its expectations for those students are.
2. The team develops a list of exit outcomes, or "graduation standards," of those qualities and skills it feels its graduates should achieve.
3. The team creates a list of interim skills and "benchmark" outcomes, which allow the students to demonstrate their progress in attaining the exit standards.
4. Teachers develop lists of specific academic skills which students will demonstrate in each subject area and class.

Once a school has developed its standards at the different levels discussed above, the school developers then build a curriculum that is an appropriate vehicle for teaching these standards, and an assessment system that accurately and effectively determines whether the students are achieving them. Again, using essential questions, the process becomes:

- What do we want our students to understand and be able to do (standards)?
- How can we best teach these things to our students—using what educational means or vehicle (curriculum)?
- How will we know whether our students have learned these skills and are able to do these things (assessment)?

All four elements—standards, curriculum, assessment, and school vision—must be aligned for a school to have a healthy, coherent educational program.

Developing and Aligning Assessment Tools

Assessments should be aligned to curriculum and standards at every level.

The following are additional key questions you might ask in the process of developing or choosing your assessment tools:

1. What should students know and be able to do? What are the desired outcomes for students?
2. How does the assessment reflect the mission and vision of the school?
3. How will we report/record student progress toward outcomes? What reporting/recording system would be appropriate to let students, parents, community, and others know where students are in relation to desired outcomes?
4. How will assessment information be used?

   By students:

   - For self-assessment, growth

   By teachers:

   - For assessing individual students or groups
   - For providing feedback to students/groups
   - For assessing effectiveness of curriculum
   - For revising/improving curriculum

   By administrators, community, and others:

   - For assessing the quality of the academic program

Selection of Assessment Tools

It is essential to use an array of different assessment tools ("multiple measures") in your evaluation. Important questions must be considered in the selection of assessment tools:

1. **Are the objectives to be measured the truly important ones?** No matter how reliable the instrument or careful its use, an assessment tool cannot correct for inappropriate or inadequate goals. It is currently fashionable, for example, to employ various systems approaches for assessing educational outcomes. Systems approaches, however, are not

good or right in themselves. They are only methods for assuring the achievement of whatever objectives the user wishes to reach. They do not distinguish between good and bad objectives, but only provide a disciplined procedure for making sure of reaching them. Applied to inadequate, inappropriate objectives, the net effect may only be to guarantee that errors will be colossal.

2. **Is the assessment tool(s) the most efficient means of determining the achievement of the desired objectives?** Assessment techniques are by no means equally efficient. Whatever the method employed, it should provide results in the most accurate and expeditious fashion possible with a minimum amount of disruption to the overall goals of the educational process. Efficient devices must stand the test, not only of reliability and validity, but also of dispatch, simplicity, ease of administration, and the like.

3. **What is the effect of the assessment tool on its user?** Whatever methods the teacher employs necessarily modify his/her behavior. This also holds true for methods of achieving accountability. Techniques used to evaluate progress toward achievement of goals, in themselves, have the effect of focusing the teacher's attention, determining purposes, and influencing directions for action. These effects are inevitable. They cannot be ignored simply because they are inconvenient. They must be taken into account in the selection of assessment techniques. Means of assessment that fence teachers in, destroy initiative, or create debilitating anxieties may prove to be too great a price to pay.

4. **What is the effect of accountability practices on the student?** Assessment techniques do not only measure learning, they also affect it. How students perceive assessment devices and what they learn from the employment of such devices must be matters of vital concern in the selection of evaluative instruments. Anyone who has ever observed how students react to different kinds of examinations can attest to the varied effects they produce. Evaluative techniques that threaten, destroy self-esteem, distort perceptions about what is really important, or encourage negative, hostile behavior may be no bargain when assessed in terms of their impact on the recipients. Students learn from all their experiences, including the experience of being evaluated, and those experiences must also be taken into account in determining accountability.

See Tool I: Assessment Action Planning Sheet (Page 60)

Types of Assessment Tools

- Traditional—such as classroom tests, quizzes, and standardized tests
- Nontraditional (a.k.a. "authentic," alternative)—such as portfolios, exhibitions, and graduation committees

In the use of nontraditional assessment tools, validity and reliability are important. The need for good, sound rubrics is also vital. For more information on the development of portfolios and rubrics, see the additional resources below.

See Tool II: Glossary of Testing Terms (Page 62)

Additional Resources for More Information on Assessment:

Assessment, Accountability, Evaluation: Coalition of Essential Schools, Brown University, (401) 863-3384

Performance Assessment Collaborative for Education (P.A.C.E.), Harvard University, (617) 496-2770

Project Zero, Harvard University, (617) 495-4342

Center for Assessment, Boston College, (617) 552-4920

National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST), www.cse.ucla.edu/. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, CRESST conducts research on important topics related to K–12 educational testing. This Web site contains contemporary assessment research findings and links to other helpful assessment information sources. Below are some of the items that may be of use in developing an assessment system of your own:

- Implementation guidebooks. Also available for downloading at this site are guidebooks for teachers and administrators implementing assessment reform (e.g., CRESST performance assessment models, *Writing What You Read Guidebook*, *Assessing the Whole Child Guidebook*, *Portfolios and High Technology*), crest96.cse.ucla.edu/guide.htm.

- Examples of performance assessments. See examples by downloading (PDF files) CRESST's Examples of Performance Assessments by Grade and Subject, www.cresst96.cse.ucla.edu/samples.htm

- Alternative Assessments in Practice Database (AAIP), www.crest.ucla.edu/database.htm. Database that can be searched online or downloaded provides detailed information about assessment type and purpose, scoring and availability, subject matter, and skills measured.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation (ERIC/AE). ERIC/AE seeks to "provide: (1) balanced information concerning educational assessment and (2) resources to encourage responsible test use," and is maintained by the Catholic University of America (CUA).

- On this site you will find extensive online resources for alternative assessment/performance-based assessment: www.ericae.net/nintbod.htm

- Users can also search using forms for Test Locators (viz. ERIC/ETS, Buros, and Pro-Ed), and can search all the assessment and evaluation sites that make up their AE list, simultaneously, through a "spider search." www.ericae.net/sintbod.htm

- This site also contains reviews and information on the ETS Tests Collection, Research Instruments, and other test publishers; news and test schedules; essays; and bibliographies.

The Buros Institute. The Buros Institute (www.unl.edu/buros) promotes meaningful and appropriate test selection, utilization, and practice. Among other helpful activities, the institute publishes information and critiques of specific published testing instruments to assist school developers to identify appropriate testing instruments.

Collecting and Reporting Performance Data

Assigning Grades

Assigning grades is a form of coding assessment information. Assigning a quality grade involves several steps:

- Spelling out the big picture. Identify clear targets—what do we want students to know and be able to do at the end of the grading period?
- Turning this big picture into an assessment plan in which learning targets are matched to assessment methods. What evidence will be gathered to show the extent to which student competencies have been attained?
- Moving from plans to assessments. The plan needs to be turned into actual assessments.
- Moving from assessments to information. The assessments must be given, scored, and results recorded.
- Summarizing the resulting information. How will different kinds of evidence be weighted and combined?
- Converting composite achievement scores to a grade. How will the composite information be converted into a grade?

Converting Scores to Grades

1. Fixed Percent Scale Method: At the end of a grading period, scores from each grading component are weighted and averaged, and assigned a letter grade based on a fixed scale.
2. Total Point Method: Teachers have students earn points throughout a grading period, then assign grades based on the point total at the end of the period.
3. Standards-Based Method: In this approach, teachers develop scoring guidelines for assignments to be included as components of the final grade.

Final Thoughts About Grading

Regardless of the method used to convert scores to grades, there are several additional complexities to be considered:

- Should grades include performances from early in the grading period or just those at the end?
- Should opportunities for revisions of work be allowed in certain skill areas (e.g., communication)?

- Should student choice (e.g., goal-setting and assembling evidence of their own learning) be part of the grading process?

Communicating Student Learning Options

As an alternative or supplement to current report cards, a number of schools are implementing reporting systems that more fully match their beliefs about the purposes of assessment in the overall picture of school learning. Some common characteristics of such alternatives are:

- An emphasis on communicating about complex skills, habits of mind, multiple intelligences, and collaborative work
- Using narratives or other alternatives to letter or number grades
- Reporting by themes or major concepts across subject areas

The following ways demonstrate student achievement in several options most unlike traditional report cards:

- Portfolios
- Narratives
- Development continuums
- Multiple sources
- Student-involved conferences

Tool I: Assessment Action Planning Sheet

This activity is developed to assist you in thinking through the issues and considerations involved in the development and selection of assessment tools. It is helpful to return often to these questions when reviewing the quality of the curriculum and assessment activities presented to students.

Assessment Action Planning Sheet—Creating an Assessment Vision for My Classroom

What do I want to accomplish with an assessment? For example: monitoring student progress, diagnosing student needs, reporting achievement to others, student self-assessment, and so forth.

What student learning objectives do I want to assess? For example: reading.

The assessment method or process I plan to explore in my classroom and why it serves the purpose and matches the learning objectives.

How will the curriculum and instruction be aligned with standards?

What kind of feedback will be given to students to help them improve?

Will this assessment be given some sort of grade? How will the grade be determined? How will you gather information?

How will you communicate student expectations?

How will you promote student ownership (buy-in)?

Will you utilize a self-, peer- or teacher-assessment process?

What other components of your assessment method or process need to be addressed?

Is this assessment method or process worth the time and effort?

Tool II: Glossary of Testing Terms

Basic Types of Tests

Achievement tests: Measure how much a student has learned, but not what a student is capable of learning (see Aptitude Tests below). Achievement tests are given after students have been instructed in a particular area of knowledge or trained in a specific set of skills.

Aptitude tests: Measure what a student is capable of learning. Cognitive ability tests and IQ tests are examples of aptitude tests. These test scores are often used to predict future performance.

Competency tests: Achievement test designed to determine whether a student has met a minimum standard of skills and knowledge in a specific subject area.

"High stakes" tests: Nationally recognized standardized tests frequently used as college admissions criteria or for National Merit Scholarships. Both the SAT and ACT are examples of "high stakes" tests.

IQ (intelligence quotient) tests: Ability tests—They are designed to compare the abilities of people who are the same age. Alfred Binet developed IQ tests early in the 20th century.

Performance-assessment tests: Alternative to standardized testing that requires a student to demonstrate knowledge of a particular subject. Also known as "open-ended" tests, these often include essay questions or applied math problems.

Terms Used To Discuss Student Performance

National percentile: Compares one student's score with those of other students. For example, if a fourth-grader's national percentile is 82, that student outperformed 82 percent of the fourth-graders. The highest percentile is 99.

Stanine: Test scores are also grouped in "stanines," nine equal units. Scores of 1–3 are considered below average, 4–6 are considered average, and 7–9 are considered above average.

Norm referencing: Performance measure based on the Bell curve. "Norm" refers to normal, or average, so that most of the scores will fall in the average range.

Other Useful Terms

Exhibitions: Presentations by a student for a panel of faculty and experts. Exhibitions are designed to determine students' knowledge of a subject and their ability to explain what they have learned.

Portfolios: Collection of a student's work gathered over time that is used to measure progress in learning. They are a type of alternative assessment.

Reliability: Measure of a test's(s') consistency. For example, if a student takes a test one day and gets an 85 and then retakes the test a few months later and gets an 83, that indicates that the test has a high degree of reliability.

Validity: Measure of a test cogency. For example, writing an essay about swimming would not be a valid test of whether a student can actually swim.

Sampling: Using the results of a group to predict the results of the whole. A school test can be given to a sample of students in such a way that the results accurately evaluate students in that category. If the sample is poorly chosen or self-selected (volunteers), the results would be meaningless. Sampling would allow school districts to save money, but is infrequently used because of political pressure.

Tool III: References/Resources

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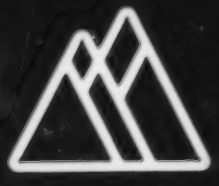
Tool IV: Charter School Development Checklist

Task	Person(s) Responsible	Resources Needed (e.g., budget, committees)
Accountability		
Revisit your vision/mission		
Describe the standards and goals for students and staff in alignment with the school vision		
Clearly identify the school goals/outcomes		
Align curriculum with school vision		
Develop academic accountability plan		
A. Develop goals, standards, and objectives		
B. Describe what the students should know and be able to do in core subject areas		
C. Describe the desired results of the school		
Establish fiscal accountability plan		
A. Develop a financial plan		
B. Develop a planning budget		
C. Assess fiscal management options		
D. Establish an oversight system		
Establish parent accountability plan		
A. Identify for whom the charter is accountable		
B. Develop communication with the public		
C. Work with the parents and community		
Develop student assessment and evaluation procedures		
A. Identify goals for students		
B. Integrate specific curriculum based on the goals and standards		
C. Conduct assessment plan		
D. Revisit curriculum and instruction based on assessment		



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